Autexousious

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/46169737.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Alana Bloom/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Alana Bloom, Jack Crawford, Freddie Lounds, Bedelia Du Maurier, Original Characters
Additional Tags:	Courtroom Drama, Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Hannibal Lecter is the Chesapeake Ripper, Hannibal Lecter Loves Will Graham, Will Graham Loves Hannibal Lecter, mentions of eating disorders, Wrongful Imprisonment, POV Second Person, Cannibalism, Hannibal Lecter is a Cannibal, Therapy, Unethical therapy, Possessive Behavior, Obsession, Someone Help Will Graham, Will Graham Helps Himself
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2023-04-01 Completed: 2024-06-23 Words: 15,670 Chapters: 9/9

Autexousious

by TheProfoundSilence

Summary

Will is MIA, Hannibal Lecter is a serial killer and nobody is alright. The court case probably doesn’t help.

Notes

So I wrote this a while back and debated relentlessly on whether I should post this. It's shamelessly self-indulgent courtroom drama from S02 divergent where Will Graham is eventually found to be innocent and Hannibal Lecter the cruel monster. But of course, don't believe everything you read in the papers. You never know when sensationalism becomes fiction.

It's unedited and beta-read so apologies for the mistakes. I might come back later and smooth out the edges.

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

The Curse of Genius and the Fallacy of Pride

How the Ripper Managed to Evade the Law for so long, is a question taken up by every news site in the vicinity. The house of horrors of Dr. Hannibal Lecter was so incriminating and inhuman that two officers quit within the week and three have been given paid medical leave, due to hysteria and traumatic stress syndromes. Today, however, we give voice to the young man, who embodies the spirit of justice even in the face of deep adversity.

For every psychopath captured comes the inevitable line from friends and neighbors, proclaiming him charming and suave, and how they could never have expected such horror from such a man. This case holds no difference. The outlier lay with the brilliant ex-FBI profiler William Jonathan Graham, who was the original whistleblower to the identity of the Ripper case.

Unfortunately for the prodigious young man, the charming psychopath was an esteemed colleague and was generally better-liked and more affluent in similar circles. As Will Graham levied accusations upon his psychiatrist, the good doctor instead framed him rather overtly for his crimes.

When Dr. Graham tried to argue for his profile, claiming that his neurological illness made him physically capable of the possibility of committing such crimes; not to mention, the lack of logic in having kept trophies in such an open space with the FBI profilers coming in and out of his house now and then, an aberration from the cautious antics of the true Copycat, he was dismissed.

Dr. Graham was then declared guilty by means of insanity, and after 2 years in the BCHI with Dr. lecter as his primary psychiatrist, he was then released into inpatient care in the hands of the same tormentor. In court, Dr. Graham had tried to argue against it by claiming that 'I really would prefer my prison cell over Hannibal Lecter's murder dungeon'.

With the approval of the then BAU's head Jack Crawford (a good friend and regular guest at Hannibal Lecter's table), Dr. Alana Bloom (Lecter's then-lover), and Dr. Hannibal Lecter himself, Will Graham was then declared a vulnerable adult, with his guardianship assigned to the man of the madness himself, and his voice effectively muffled even in the course for his medical treatment.

Will Graham lived there for at least 3 years before he mysteriously vanished from polite society and was never seen again. Hannibal Lecter hosted a dinner party almost two days before Graham's last sighting, inviting his FBI work colleagues, joking that he had gone on 'to follow his dreams'. Not one person at the dinner table, all of them former colleagues and friends of Graham himself, questioned this.

Now, it is widely accepted that Hannibal Lecter killed and ate what was left of Will after years of abuse and torture, and fed the rest to his former friends in an ironic nod to their inability to see the truth. Will Graham's professional success leaves behind a plethora of

solved cases and a deep insight into the criminal mind like no other. He has posthumously been rewarded with his doctorate for his accurate profiling methods and his pursuit of justice even until the very end, fast-tracking his thesis and application which had been black-listed years ago in face of his criminal case.

While Hannibal Lecter is still on the run, the sacrifices Dr. Will Graham made for the country will never be forgotten, and there has been quite a lot of noise about awarding him for his courage and bravery posthumously. A trial is to be held to clear him of all charges, now with the new evidence coming to light. The former head of BAU, Jack Crawford has since been suspended in wake of the news. The Times stands with Will Graham and hopes to see justice finally dawn for the young profiler.

A candlelight vigil is to be held near his former residence, which has now been fully restored and refurbished as a memorial for the late detective.

Alana Bloom had already exhausted her supply of the liquor cabinet by the time Jack came calling. She let him in her temporary guest house. The media circus had made her primary residence near inhabitable.

“Nice place,” Jack said neutrally.

“It’s better than living at home right now,” she smiled humorlessly. “And loads better than Lecter’s- how did Will put it? -murder dungeon, that’s for sure. God, Jack,” she trembled suddenly. She hadn’t spoken Will’s name in over a year now. She hadn’t thought of him in nearly as long, and the last she had thought of him fondly had been before his murder attempt on Hannibal. That was almost 5 years ago. She suddenly wished he had succeeded. “We left him alone with that bastard when Will stood there and begged us not to.”

“We didn’t know,” Jack said softly.

“Don’t even fucking dare to do that Jack,” Alana snapped. “You always, always did that. Always. It was your way or the highway and if it didn’t work out, you always found someone else to yell at and blame. That someone else turned out to be Will Graham, more often than not. And now that he is dead? Well, how could you have known, woe be you. After all, your brilliant profiler isn’t around to do all your work for you anymore, and what little he was still doing, you didn’t want to listen to.”

“God, Alana, you think it doesn’t haunt me? I haven’t been able to get his eyes out of my head since the day the news broke. I see him everywhere, every fucking where. Never saying anything. Just staring at me, pale-faced with those sad blue eyes of his. I killed him. I killed him and then I ate him, and I will never, ever get over it.” He wept.

~

It took Alana nearly 10 minutes to cover the 50 meters from her garage to her gate. It normally barely took her 5 seconds. To her right, yet another reporter banged his hand against the car window, yelling something at her. She was getting good at ignoring them by now.

Finally, near the road, she hit the pedal and peeled out of the driveway. The radio started blaring about the trial today, and she hurriedly changed the station. As Mozart started playing, she flinched and shut it down.

She glanced in her rearview mirror at the apparition sitting behind her. “Sorry, I guess you wouldn’t like opera and classical music very much now, would you?” Will blinked at her, those sad blue eyes, and turned to look out the window.

Doubt churned her mind. As Will would have pointed out, Stockholm Syndrome and trauma bonding was a thing. A complex enough psychological measure that even knowing it would not have saved Will from its effects. Chances were, he had given in by the end, sympathized, and empathized with Hannibal. “Guess I don’t know you enough to say even this with any certainty, yeah? Goes on to show what I know.” What a sad state of affairs, that all her mind could conjure up of her once good friend was this sad silent ghost haunting her backseat.

~

“All rise for the Honorable Judge Madson.” Jack rose mechanically. Alana was right by his side, yet she refused to meet his eye.

“This trial is being conducted to challenge a previous conviction of the closed case Will Graham vs State, which ended with guardianship being awarded to Dr. Hannibal Lecter indefinitely. An appeal has been filed and the case is taken on pro bono by the Williamson Law firm for the presumed dead accused. The defendant and the prosecutor may begin with the starting remarks.”

Mr. Scott Williams, the lawyer of the hour himself, stood up. With his sharp suit and sharper gaze, she had no doubt he would have gotten Will out 6 years ago had he been his lawyer instead of a state-appointed formality one.

He clicked on the projector and Jack is surprised to see a candid of Will, beaming happily at the camera. He has never so much as seen the other man smile unironically in his presence. Unsurprisingly, the smile is all thanks to a stray pup the man is holding in his arm, its little paws resting against his arm, curled lazily around the ecstatic man. Jack suspects he may have seen a full-sized version of the same pup in Will’s house before.

“William Jonathan Graham,” Scott nodded to the picture. “The success of his profiling history needs little mentioning. Not to mention, his devotion to service led him to overwork himself even with a verbally abusive superior, little support system, a destructive psychiatrist, and a brain inflammation which had a good chance of killing him.” Alana felt Jack flinch next to her.

“When he wasn’t out catching killers or teaching the next generation of FBI profilers, he was out rescuing dogs. I almost couldn’t believe it when they told me that this kind of a man still exists surrounded by the sort of toxicity he was surrounded by, but he didn’t even necessarily keep them. Just retrained them to be a better company for hopeful pet owners.

Every year, he is estimated to have rescued and rehabilitated 10-20 dogs in all. Those who weren’t claimed or adopted or were too old to let go, he kept. He made them all food from scratch, every single day and has reportedly never turned away a stray. A woman recently came forward and claimed he had once seen her freezing in the winter and brought her a pair of brand-new wool boots. What he refused to spend on himself, he spent on everyone around him.

And yet, his autism and lack of social skills left his colleagues with a bad taste for his methods. In the previous trial, it was repeatedly implied that he was only good at catching criminals because he had a criminal mind, and his uncanny ability to be right left others with a sour feeling of jealous inadequacy that made him few friends and left him vulnerable to predators-”

Alana turned away and stared at the projection of Will smiling, eyes twinkling with unspoken secrets, cheeks just slightly dimpled as he stared into the camera. Behind the mirage, sad eyes peered back at her. At least no one could say she had nothing in common with Will anymore. They were both broken together, finally.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

> I had hoped to publish this yesterday but got caught up in some work. Happy 10th birthday to NBC Hannibal. I only found it 3-4 months ago and it already has me by the throat. I suspect a part of it always will.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Will had been little, his father in all his wisdom had told him, ‘there is no such thing as a bad time, Will. There are always good things and bad things in your life, all the time. What matters is what you’re focusing on.’

Had it been anyone else, anyone but his father, worn and torn from a hard life, still smiling when others would have been drinking, Will would have dismissed it. His father had seen the really really bad times and he had walked out of hell barefoot with Will in tow, and nobody around was going to credit him for it, but Will could see the sacrifices he had made and the tears he had shed. Unsurprisingly, he was even mostly right.

Every time things went from bad to worse, Will would take a breather, and figure out the still good things in his life. Topping the list was always his dogs, so pure and happy and clean they made even him forget his world. Now that they weren’t around though…

Don’t think like that, he chided himself.

His dogs were all still alive, given good homes, and had settled in well, and wasn’t that all he wanted for them? For all Alana had done against him, the fact that she had protected his dogs when otherwise they might have been euthanized for being afflicted with a killer wiped all her sins clean. He would forgive her anything now.

His new cell room was much nicer than his previous one with art and books and music and a lock for privacy. It wasn’t even cold, and he could even pop down to the kitchen to eat if he really wanted to. He wouldn’t but he could.

Now, if Alana and Hannibal stopped having marathon sex like it was going out of fashion, he might even be able to sleep. The headrest kept thudding against the wall of his bedroom right behind his head. It had been 3 hours plus and ticking. They showed absolutely no sign of slowing down.

Will knew well that if he just clicked the lock of his door open, or yelled at them to stop, they would. Immediately. Hannibal just needed that sign of life from him. Because he wanted to hold that flame of life in his hands. He had already taken what Will was fool enough to offer. Now that he refused to offer, the Ripper would take it by the neck and bite it’s vulnerable throat straight through. Nothing was safe here.

He had to remember that. He almost opened his mouth to say it, but the words stuck in his throat. Common sense and self-preservation kept him quiet. When he managed to exhale, it was a soft mumble that felt still too loud for now. The banging didn't slow down.

Tears tickled the inside of his throat, he turned in his bed and lay down. Like every other day since he got here, he would probably cry himself to sleep today. Still, he liked sleeping now. He hoped he wouldn't have to wake up anytime soon.

~

Hannibal knocked on his door with the same punctuality at 8 sharp. Will turned over and hitched his blanket higher. It was nice to be warm again and he didn't plan to get out anytime soon. The shadow by his door walked away.

Hannibal knocked again at 9, at 10, and finally a little sharply again at 11. Will didn't answer a single one. Finally, when the knocking got too persistent at 12, he frowned at the door, still making no move to get up.

"Will," Hannibal said softly, his voice lyrical and calm. "Breakfast is ready, Will. Come on down It's been over 10 hours of you sleeping, Will. I think that's enough before you get bed sores."

Do you realize how often you say my name, Will wondered petulantly but there was no heat behind it. He felt so lethargic. He knew that sleeping wouldn't help his lethargy but he still wanted to lay back down. Still, he shuffled out of his warm burrow, slowly making his way to the door. He wanted it closed forever.

Hannibal waited patiently for the long five minutes it took for Will to unlock the door. He smiled coolly at Will's blank expression. "I made waffles with ice cream and brownies, and some apple pie for lunch. Would you like that, Will?"

Catering to my sweet tooth, Will realized. He said nothing. He felt like he had lost his appetite since the day the bars closed around him and he realized what he had unknowingly munched on and swallowed whole. Smile faltering, Hannibal motioned for Will to go first. Will had no compunction turning his back on Hannibal. Whatever the man needed to do, he had already done, and would inevitably do. There was no point in screaming.

At the breakfast table, Hannibal poured him a cup of freshly brewed coffee and slid in a plate of breakfast in front of Will. "I already ate," Hannibal said lightly as if it weren't obvious by the fact that it was now nearing lunchtime. "Please don't hesitate on my account."

Will made no motion towards either the cup or the plate, his hands placidly settled on his lap. He wondered idly if and how Hannibal had managed to put human remains in dishes that weren't even meat-oriented. The man would have found a way.

"It's not," Hannibal paused. "It doesn't have any of my ingredients in it. I could show you the wrappers for the ingredients if you'd like."

That proved nothing, Will thought to Hannibal cynically. Hannibal sighed and got up. Will imagined he would eat the untouched plate himself later. For all his faults, he would never waste food if he could help it. But instead of taking the plate, Hannibal just walked out and into the kitchen.

He came back with a couple of bags of filled groceries. He handed Will a packet of chips, organic and undoubtedly expensive. “Sealed,” Hannibal showed him. “They’re all sealed. They’re really not good for you, but you must eat something. The meds in your system are targeting the immune system and if you don’t eat, even a common cold could turn lethal, mon cher.”

Will took the pack of chips with neutral affliction. Did Hannibal know the factory owner? Had he convinced them to pack his own supplies? Or did he make these labels himself? The thought amused him.

Almost as if he were reading his mind, Hannibal wrapped his hands against Will’s own. They were warm and soft, almost unlike a killer’s hands even though Will could feel the strength behind them. “Darling, please. We can go shopping and you can pick out your own groceries and we can choose your own fruits and buy them in the market if you must, but please. I beg of you, eat something.” He lay his head against their enjoined palms in a sign of calculated vulnerability.

Carefully, very carefully, Will tore open the pack of chips and cradled it against his chest. The thought of eating in front of Hannibal made him dizzy. Still, Hannibal smiled back at him hesitantly. Let him. It wasn’t like Will was fool enough to eat the food a serial killer handed him.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the short chapters, but hey, the work is done, I just need to keep uploading regularly so at least you'll get quick updates! Kinda slow on the action, but I suspect Will wants it that way. He needs time to bait the fish after all.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

> Little too busy to reply to comments today, I promise to come back to them soon. I did read them all and loved them a lot!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Freddie Lounds looked for once, like a pale ghost, as she was sworn in. All of her smugness and arrogance seemed to have melted against her, leaving a pale human facing the consequences of her reckless actions.

"So Miss Lounds," Scott walked over to Freddie, that hint of calculated anger sharp in his gaze. "In the last trial, Will Graham vs State, you are on record having claimed that Abigail Hobbs had *confided* in you, and claimed that she was afraid of Will Graham cannibalizing and eating her. And yet, Ms. Hobbs has now miraculously returned from death and claims to have never done so. In fact, she claims that she even told you once that she did not want her book deal to reflect badly on Will Graham or Hannibal Lecter, her official guardians at the time."

The judge leaned down to peer at her. "Miss Lounds, your testimony of such a clear-cut accusation of the presumed dead against her alleged killer had significant implications for the court. This isn't a game of tabloid journalism where you must feed the juicy details over the truth. I understand I do not have to tell you the implications of perjury?"

She exhaled slowly. "Will Graham is a hero in today's world. He wasn't always like that. He was a sweaty twitchy man who prioritized his dogs over people and could follow the paths that criminals took because he could think exactly the way they thought. He was brilliant and I was afraid he might wiggle out of the justice system simply because he was that clever. I just needed to make sure that Abby got the justice she deserved."

Williams snapped up. "Miss Lounds, the court of law does not and has never prosecuted people on the basis of gut feelings and thoughts. There is a reason that the art of profiling does not hold in a court of law. If we started doing that, I am afraid we would need to round up all the mystery writers and tabloid journalists and send them to jail. What counts in court are actions and cold hard facts. And the facts are that while Dr. Graham's actions have shown him to be the FBI special agent he never officially got to be, yours have sentenced an innocent man to death."

"Objection, your Honor," the prosecutor said, just as the defendant stepped aside with a murmured apology. The damage however was done.

The prosecutor, Nade Jackson stepped up with a smile when it was his turn. “I would like to allude to Will Graham’s journal that had been confiscated in the BSCHI in his two years stay there and I have with me here now.”

The judge raised an eyebrow. “I take it that is not official policy to do so?”

“No, sir,” Jackson admitted reluctantly. “As it is supposed to be a part of therapy, it was neither meant to be read nor confiscated for any reason. It was an abuse of power and authority.” It called for sympathy, it called for outrage against Will Graham’s wrongful incarceration. It went against Jackson’s lawyer book to not divulge the reason for the confiscation.

One day, Will had snapped at some guards who had been a little too easy, a little too rough on their patients. After all, who would step up for the rights of these monsters? Who would even believe them? And Will had snapped up and tore out half the cheek of one man. He had almost been assaulted. He had survived it. Jackson could freely admit, if only to himself, that he must have had to pay back for it in triplicate.

Still, Jackson refused to put it forward, put Graham into a position where he would be seen as pitiful and vicious. Something to grimace over from a distance but not come too forward for fear of catching their crazy. Dead or not, the man had suffered enough indignity and scorn in life that even he would not be monster enough to drag his name down in death.

Alana, unbeknownst to the history behind the journal, looked away. She wondered what sort of outlet Will exercised in such an impossible situation.

“In this one journal entry, it reads:

This is Will Graham. The date is the 23rd of December, and I suspect the time is anywhere between 7 to 8ish PM, considering when the lights came on. PS to anyone reading my diary and don’t lie, I know you are: these lights are an exercise in psychological torture and need to be banned ASAP.

A chuckle went around the courtroom.

I hate the holidays, I really do. Truth be told, I have never really been fond of them in the least because they call for consumerism and socializing, two things I am not too fond of; and when people hear I plan to spend Christmas alone, they pity invite me to some party or the other, never mind the fact that the only thing I look forward to in the holidays is sleeping in and not having to be around other people.

How relatable, a journalist smiled behind Alana with a soft laugh, as if she really understood or empathized with the depths of Will’s neuroticism. Alana resisted the urge to scoff.

The one thing I could have hoped for in prison (oops, sorry, psychiatric care, not that’s any better) is that people would finally stop disturbing me in here. Not so much. So far, I have been approached by my lawyer for a quick pity gift: a book I had been meaning to read for a long time that he knew about (it’s almost alarming how genuine he is sometimes though I like him anyway), Hannibal Lecter for a very long session that he seemed very reluctant to shut

down despite me almost falling asleep on him (he ordered the dose be brought down, which is hilarious because all these people love playing Russian Roulette with my medication and I am sure it's not even gonna affect them but its gonna blow up in my face someday) and then Freddie Lounds for a quick quote on something I was too stoned to hear properly.

Alarmingly, the dosage has brought down the walls that I spent an eternity building up. My empathy is going haywire and I latch randomly onto people I wish I wouldn't latch onto. I have settled for keeping an OCD-level organized cell, thanks to the doctor's influence (as long as he doesn't infect me with cannibalism and serial murdering, I think I am good).

Today, I latched onto Freddie Lounds.

She drove out of her way near the holidays just for a quote on a story she should know holds little public interest today. She didn't come here for a smug reflection of our past or just to taunt me with my grey lifeless walls (though of course, now that she was here, she did not hold back on an opportunity to do either).

She was lonely, and she came here for Abigail Hobbs. Despite herself, she did care for Abigail and she needed to see with her two eyes that her murderer was still rotting in a cell somewhere. He is honestly holding a dinner party for 50 with dishes accounting for another 10 of the population, but as far as she is concerned, she did her part right.

I have never been too fond of her, though I confess I am not too fond of most people. They are all capable of being good, and they are all capable of being just as bad. Most of them have the capacity to love well and to kill well, regardless of whether they admit it or not. She is no better. She may even be worse than some.

Her tendency to ambition put her at odds in school playgrounds and isolated her peers and family from her. She has no contacts, save for the ones she exploits and discards at the whim of a moment and believes she can fill the emptiness in her rooms with pockets full of cash, but she won't. She will do anything to get to the top, and that is precisely why she never will. She has made too many enemies for them to let her win big.

Unsurprisingly, I hate her for her role in my incarceration. If she weren't around, if she hadn't poked her fingers in places she didn't belong, I would perhaps still end up here. I might have more allies though. It really is true; she is busy destroying me for money, Chilton is doing it for fame and Hannibal Lecter for fun.I almost thought of sending her away and telling her exactly what I thought of her.

But I marched down to say hi. Because she didn't come here for me. She came here for Abigail. And after everything, after my poor choice in friends and a poorer call of judgment, Abigail deserved at least this much effort from me.

She sat down and stared at me. Asked me questions. Told me that she thought I belonged here, she was glad I was here. I think just this once, I'll forgive her obnoxiousness and her ignorant hypocrisies. For all her faults, she genuinely cared for Abigail. She genuinely wanted to see her succeed. And her lonely fear and outrage shone back at me with the perfect sentiment that I can't not forget her.

I feel good today, her words may have been cruel and callous but her sentiments were clear. Whatever has happened, I have too many enemies as is. I think I'll forgive her."

Freddie was sobbing at the side, and there were tears in a lot of people's eyes as they heard that. "Will Graham was an excellent judge of character. He saw in Miss Lounds the capacity and propensity to do good, and by his own voice and words, forgave her her actions."

Scott Williams got up, his expression pained. Nobody could tell whether it was real or a farce, he was that good an actor. "Objection to the relevance of the reading, your Honor."

"Granted."

"In the same journal, he once wrote, *I wish I could hate Hannibal Lecter for all he has done me wrong. And yet, he does not realize why his actions are wrong, only that they do not align with that of polite society and so he must hide them. In his head, he is freeing me of societal obligations by removing me from society and giving me a chance to test my strength, to see that I am stronger than I perceive myself to be.*

In his head, he has gone out of his way to do me good, and hating him for his actions would be ridiculously insane, and I am not insane, not anymore. I cannot hate him, but I still find myself disappointed in myself for not having taken the warning signs for the red flags they were, back when I had still had the chance to do so. Still, these emotions he invokes in me when he crosses my mind, and he crosses it regularly…I really must find a way to deal with my feelings for him, before I can deal with him in real life."

"You argue that Freddie Lounds was doing good and that Will forgave her," Williams snapped the diary shut. "I argue that he even had the caliber to forgive a monster like Hannibal Lecter despite the personal nature of the crimes against him. Empathy is a perception pointed at both ends. As long as he understands people, he will forgive them for their bad because he can see their propensity for good. He once claimed in one of his unfinished unpublished academic papers, *The Insights into the Criminal Mind and their Perception of Society* that he believed there was no good or evil, only people on a spectrum of emotions. I plead a motion to not let his forgiveness color the depth of the crimes against him."

"Granted." Williams smiled at Jackson, who frowned, knowing well he was against a league of lawyers he had no hope of fighting against. The plethora of evidence and public opinion backed Williams as well. But then again, his job wasn't to prove Will Graham guilty, it was to protect the FBI in their hamfisted attempts to save face publicly.

Freddie Lounds could burn in the bed she had made herself if that was what pleased her.

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Dr. Alana Bloom, gossiped the tabloid rags, was a lovely psychiatrist, specializing in family trauma; and on the side, they coldly gossiped, she was really good at inducing trauma. In unofficial accounts and by eyewitness gossip, Will Graham and Alana Bloom had once had a little something on the side.

‘Never saw them kiss or anything, they just had a spark,’ a colleague chasing after his 5 minutes of fame admitted. ‘Of course, you just don’t know what they were doing off on the side, in that isolated house of his.’

As soon as the news about Will Graham’s crimes broke, she was in bed with her mentor, having taken in all of Will’s seven dogs and putting him in the impossible position of being in debt to a woman who was once a former lover and had since abandoned ship to fall in bed with his own worst enemy.

Between the health of his canine companions and his misplaced affection for Alana, Hannibal Lecter had a decent collateral hold over Will. A man at the local farmer’s market claimed he once saw Will, who he had believed mute at the time, tiredly rubbing his eyes, and when asked, signed, *My roommate and his girlfriend are much too loud. They go at it for hours every night, every day of the week so far.* The farmer had laughed with Will, commiserating with him, never realizing the cruelty of his ex-flame fucking his once-best friend so close to his own bedroom.

“So Miss Bloom,” Scott Williams smiled thinly. “Did you once have romantic designs on Dr. Will S. Graham?”

“He kissed me once. Once. And I rejected him, then and there. We were never romantically or sexually involved.”

“Of course,” Williams nodded. “You were pursuing someone else at the time.”

“No,” she objected, but it came out weaker than she had intended. She cleared her throat, and tried again. “No, I wasn’t looking for anyone at the time. I- every time I get into a relationship, I tend to overthink it, become a therapist to them until they grow disappointed by me or I do.”

“But that didn’t happen with Hannibal Lecter, I presume? He was your perfect white knight, I heard he had to break it off to get you to back off in the end. If only you had done some thinking there…” She colored darkly at his mocking tone, as the prosecutor yelled out an objection and the judge granted it, Williams murmuring an apology that fooled no one around.

“He didn’t break up with me, I broke up with him,” she murmured. “But he didn’t really seem disappointed or surprised.”

“Oh?” Williams rose an eyebrow.

“I was seeing someone else,” she admitted. “It didn’t really work out but…”

The Baltimore Times commented, …sensing a pattern in Dr. Alana Bloom’s ill-fated romantic entanglements here…

“Well, you dodged a bullet there, phew,” Williams smiled wide at her, falsely cheerful. Alana stared blankly behind him. Will had dropped his doe-eyed morose look to look accusingly at her. She was almost thrilled she remembered something else to construct about her friend’s

memory. She swore to go through every picture, every video, every testimony, and audio she had of him. She needed to reconstruct his voice again.

“And he never tried to take revenge, never so much as murmured his disappointment when we know now that he ate anyone who seemed to offend him?”

She colored. “I don’t know what you’re implying here, but no, he seemed happy to put his distance between us after that. He never invited me over to his house after that, though he sometimes fed me with the rest of the team on big cases. I don’t- I really don’t know.”

The judge peered down. “The court grants the motion to reconstruct the timeline of events for better clarity here.”

Williams nodded. “Most of it is tied to the case of Hannibal Lecter and his crimes, which is a case in progress and far from ready to present in court. But this takes place almost 3 months past the date he was granted guardianship. Witness testimonies state that the affair was going on long enough that there were rumors of a more serious engagement when he introduced Alana Bloom to his colleague and friend, Anthony Dimmond, and happily turned the other way while he flirted with her all night.

The subsequent break-up gave Hannibal a good reason to put his distance and evict her from his house where we presume she was now starting to get comfortable. It also gave him the excuse to hold off on societal obligations so he could better focus his energies on Dr. Graham, but at this point, it’s mostly conjecture and there is little evidence of the same, though the facts fit this theory.”

The judge nodded thoughtfully. “Please continue.”

“Dr. Bloom, I would like you to construct your thinking process and line of reasoning when signing the forms granting your ex-boyfriend guardianship of your former friend. I am sure your professional instincts had some reasons, apart from your personal stake in the case.”

Alana stared down blankly. She thought about Will’s fear of prison and his even greater apprehension of being declared a vulnerable adult in Hannibal Lecter’s hands. Logic dictated that anyone else, any other person should have taken on Will’s case when he had such a deep fear of Hannibal. Psychosis or not, no relationship could exist in that vacuum of loss of trust and that abject fear and violence Will displayed in Hannibal’s presence.

And yet, Hannibal had taken her hand, fingertips touching in a semblance of soft intimacy that had made her stare down with wonder. ‘I can get to him, I promise. Trust in my professional capabilities. And we are all friends here, Alana. I can get us our Will back, I really can. Don’t you trust me? Don’t you want Will back?’

And she had. She had trusted him. She had wanted Will back. She had said yes.

“Will seemed to get better in Lecter’s guardianship,” she murmured. Nobody missed how she said Lecter and not Hannibal, distancing herself now in a case of ‘too little, too late’. “It was slow at first, but he would come out of his room, talk, listen, respond. He wasn’t violent with

anyone, not even aggressive really if I am being honest. The therapy seemed to have a positive impact."

"And you're sure you're not confusing learned helplessness with getting better? Not to mention, this was after your decision to sign away his life, and could not have possibly been a factor in your decision-making. What made you sign those papers, Dr. Bloom?"

She wept. "Hannibal Lecter told me to do it."

"And you do everything he asks you to do."

Sun ran the story on their fifth page, the first a tribute to the life of Will Graham. They called her 'Lecter's loyal lapdog'.

Chapter End Notes

Do you guys see the shameless self-indulgence I delight in? XD. Again, this one I wrote for fun to pass the time, it's got no editing and it's far from perfect. Still, it was fun to write :)

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal dismissed Alana soon after Will managed to speak his first word in months. That word had been unsurprisingly Winston. The dog had come home to his master in Hannibal's own sharp Bentley, an admittedly desperate attempt to shock Will's system back to life.

Bad news after a couple of exhausting awful years was expected, and Hannibal did not wish to be associated with every bad thing in Will's life. At this rate, all Will would be able to come up with when he thought of Hannibal was 'monster'. Even Will's empathy had its limits and Hannibal did not wish to push his luck anymore. Will would have all the good lovely things in his world if Hannibal could help it, and Hannibal could help it.

Will's reaction to Winston was worth the hair in his Bentley, the mess and the smell of wet dog that Hannibal was not looking forward to. Will had been sunbathing in the backyard, a luxurious privilege after prison, and for a second, he tilted his head to the dog and his eyes showed incomprehension and that same callous apathy that had been bugging Hannibal for so long.

Then his eyes lit up with all the light of a supernova in action, and all of Hannibal melted away. Winston, Will whispered almost hoarsely as the mutt barked once in excitement and ran forward. It was hard to tell which one of the two found their reunion more fulfilling.

Then Will glanced up, face shuttering, a hand protectively curled around Winston's fur. Hannibal realized just how good a bargaining chip the dog would make, and how well Will knew him to pick up on it.

He didn't try to console Will, simply said, "He is your responsibility. You must walk him, play with him and feed him." A reason to get out of bed and take charge again, Hannibal mentally checked down his list. "And I must insist on starting with 1500 calories a day, even if you wish to switch to a more vegetarian diet. You must also take those meals with me."

There. Will would now not be looking for an ulterior motive when Hannibal had 'shown his hand'.

Will looked at him quietly for a second, then very slowly, nodded his head. Hannibal could have sighed in relief.

By the very same evening, he had introduced Anthony Dimmond to Alana Bloom.

~

Will came down the stairs, slowly, almost apprehensively. Hannibal didn't look up, choosing to keep his gaze focused on the finishing touches of the meal. Will walked in barefoot, faltered for a second, but then settled down onto a chair.

Hannibal kept quiet, letting the silence grow loud. Did not comment on the arches on Will's bare feet peeking from underneath the table, and the missing dog that was undoubtedly lounging in Will's bedroom.

Will finally broke. "Can I eat my canned fruits instead?"

"You can eat anything you want, Will," Hannibal said mildly, setting Will's portion back into the fridge without fanfare. "Though if you would really prefer to eat fruits for meals, we really must shop for some fresher ones. The stored ones simply don't have the same nutritional value."

The relief on Will's face almost made him smile. He dug in, replaying the same few words on repeat. It had been much too long since Will had been cognizant and verbal with him. He would cherish these words and the emotions they inspired in him forever. Just this one moment, frozen in the wild streams of time.

Will finished his fruits and was polite enough to sit all the way to the end for dinner. As soon as Hannibal had swallowed the last bite, Will was out, ready to run back to the comfort of the room he had started thinking of as 'his'.

"Wait just a moment, Will," Hannibal implored. He handed Will the pages. "Takeout restaurants near us. Despite my better judgment, I have added in here the chain brands, though I implore you to shop from the better ones when you can. You know where the cash is. Order when it pleases you."

Will took them mechanically, head down. As Hannibal turned to look away, Will said, so softly Hannibal almost missed it. "You don't have empathy and yet you know exactly how to handle my eating condition."

Hannibal smiled at Will, there was nothing human behind his eyes, just raw curiosity and a desire to dig deeper. Only the knowledge that he might break Will beyond this stayed his hand. "I am a psychiatrist, you know. And I think I understand better than most what it's like to eat someone you got too close to. And you did get close to all those murder victims, didn't you, Will?"

Will nodded stiffly. "I can get close to anyone," he whispered. *Even you.*

"Everybody responds differently to trauma," Hannibal said cynically. "Even in this, we seem to have manifested differently."

Will looked up, surprised at Hannibal's retreating back.

~

It took almost two weeks of silent meals.

Will had gone from having canned peaches and apples to fresh grapes and strawberries. He would make himself salads (without dressing), eat chips, swallow down a chocolate or two,

and occasionally order takeout. The takeout varied every time, circling from McD's to Plethora and Wendy's to Raven.

The expensive restaurants called for Will to get smaller portions and limited bites, while he seemed to put no such limit on the cheaper ones. On hungry days, he would happily order a couple of cheeseburgers from Burger King and on more cautious ones, perhaps a small meal from Phoenix would do.

Hannibal wanted to assure Will that he would always have enough to feed them both, that it had taken him such an impossibly long time to be certain of it too, but it was okay to eat. As much and whatever he wanted to. But Will wasn't trying to save Hannibal's money. That was just instinct, born from years of poverty. It was the same instinct that called for Will's minimal lifestyle even on a hefty FBI salary.

Words could not reverse habits, and so Hannibal watched. He did not say a thing when Will, in his mind, 'overspent' and did not say a thing when he *underspent* (this, by Hannibal's standards, was always). Will was waiting for a reaction, and there needed to be none for now.

Winston, thankfully, was eating well, and was not a victim of Will's mental budget planning. Every now and then, Will would meekly ask for the kitchen, sometimes signing, sometimes speaking hoarsely. And Hannibal would gracefully step aside from his domain, and let Will work as he pleased.

He never made anything for himself. Time would hopefully remedy that.

But it was Winston who got Will out of his shell of shock and grief and it was he who got them talking at last.

One day, Will had just come back from a short walk in the backyard, playing with Winston. Hannibal could hear the sound of his soft occasional giggle all the way to his dining area. He could scarcely believe he had missed hearing something so melodic before.

Will came in, barefoot. He had left his muddy slippers out by the door, which Hannibal appreciated more than he would say. Despite himself, Hannibal heard himself say, "I would remember this moment forever, Will."

He looked up, wild and carefree and beautiful, and almost smiled back.

It got easier after that. It was still hard for Will to get up, to face the day but Winston needed to be let out, needed someone to play with, needed food, needed a bath. It got Will up, it got him doing something at least. Small steps, Hannibal reminded himself. Small steps.

It was cold winter, and Will would spend his afternoons lounging about, soaking the sun, chasing after the light after it had been denied to him for so long. In some ways, BSCHI was worse than prison. The prison had yard time and socialization, the necessary needs for human animals. Chilton did not run his institution humanely.

The sun was just one component Will chased after.

Will chased after Winston's love for affection, and dreaded it all the same. The first time Will hugged Winston, he cried. The next few times were no better. Sometimes the mutt would walk in unexpectedly and bump Will's legs, or headbutt him while Will was sitting down.

The first time he had done it, Hannibal heard Will all the way from the garage where he was leaving for his practice. When he ran up to see what was happening, he found the dog morosely scratching at his precious wood while Will hyperventilated on the other side of the door.

Hannibal stared blankly at the shut door and wondered how impossibly long it would take Will to not balk at a human touch when his own beloved dog was enough to leave him scrambling. It was the first time Hannibal almost felt like he may have miscalculated, just a little.

He had to apologize and reschedule his patients while Winston whined and ruffed at the locked door and then spent almost half an hour calming Will down enough to open the door. He did. But the rest of the day, he walked blankly around with the same lost face Hannibal had often seen in prison, like a part of him had just checked out and left this plane of reality for a while.

It was easy to go into your head when things are bad, and Will had had too much practice doing it. It would be hard to convince Will to let go of this crutch, Hannibal bitterly realized. Chilton was the most incompetent fool he had had the displeasure to meet. For years, he had worked it to his benefit. Now he was reaping the seeds of his arrogance.

"Will," he would whisper finally, tone amused and disappointed. "What am I to do with you?"

Will looked up, his blue eyes the shade of a hazy sky on a cloudy day when the storm has yet to blow in. Will Graham has known Hannibal to be a monster for over 2 years now. It's the first time he looks terrified of him.

Something almost like hurt bubbles underneath Hannibal's skin, but he almost feels the same. He is just as afraid of hurting Will as Will is of getting hurt. Neither of them had realized until that moment just how close to the edge Will stood. It's like the first time Hannibal caught a bird in the palms of his hands.

The delicate bones in its body had made him want to snap them. He had done it so easily. He wants to snap Will too sometimes. Peek inside him and see what makes him tick, how he works, who he is at any given moment that makes him think the things he thinks.

There is a part of him that wants to try to mend the shattered teacup instead.

Chapter End Notes

Again, far from my best work, it's unedited and I just wrote it for fun. Still, if you guys liked it, do lemme know! It really brightens up my day :)

Chapter 5

'I don't belong to these masses of humans, all of them laughing and crying and feeling and walking along their paths hand in hand with people they all know they will lose one day. Will Graham, to most people, is a story brought for a dollar for entertainment on boring days. As a consolation, as bad as their lives may be, some people have it worse. That some people are worse. I don't think I am better or worse. Most days, I don't think I am anything at all.'

"I've never seen you let a case get to you in quite a long while," Mary walked behind Scott, a hand lightly on his shoulder as he looked up from the scanned copies he was rummaging through.

"I haven't seen such a gross miscarriage of justice in a very long while. Hell, perhaps ever," Scott chuckled bitterly, tossing back the last of his whiskey. "Imagine being so gifted and good, and still having society scorn you just because you're different. His boss abused him. His love interest told him he was unstable and unfit for dating, then fell in bed with his own friend. And his psychiatrist and best friend turned out to be a serial killer and master manipulator who conspired to throw him in jail. And then, because even that wasn't enough, the girl he loved as his own daughter chose to help a serial killer rather than come to him for help. How the hell does anyone survive that kind of trauma?"

"I don't think you do," Mary said, eyes hard. "I think you just change and become someone who can cope with it, or you don't. Will was, by all accounts, mostly sane even till the end. If he had the chance to live, he would have survived this. He might never have trusted anyone else ever again though."

Scott chuckled. "I keep thinking about that news report we saw when Hannibal Lector was awarded guardianship. I said to my business partners, I wish he had gotten the noose. People like that shouldn't be out in polite society. And they agreed. We *laughed* about it, Mary. I will never forget that."

Mary, despite herself, let a single tear drip down her cheek. She thought of Will, that badass neurodivergent FBI agent as the force of good he was. Scott would have gotten along with him. She would have too. She was so sorry she never got the chance to try. "Do you want me to help out?"

Scott looked up, surprised. "You said criminal law is bad for you, love. That's why you went into civil. I don't want to drag you back."

She smiled wobbly, and pressed her hand against a glossed picture of Will, ducking against a harsh camera's glare. They made his blues stand out in stark contrast to his pale skin. "I am already too close to this one. It's too late to protect me, I need to do something now that I am here."

Scott didn't argue, just nodded, eyes bright. Good man. She knew there was a reason she loved him.

~

Hannibal Lecter had famously held parties that were known in Baltimore, Virginia, and even DC for their elegance and sophistication. His table was fit for his colleagues and his acquaintances from various walks of life.

Among them included world-class doctors and psychiatrists, art critics, high-end society, and even political men including but not limited to the mayor, BAU head, ministers from various departments, diplomats, and in one horrifying case, even the prince from a visiting country.

Needless to say, hardly any of them were taking it well.

Therapists were booked, psychiatrists hogged, news channels contacted and for a while, the tristate area had developed a strange aversion to the meat that had led to many butchers' closing up for the time being. A hysterical minister had sobbed that he had let his pregnant wife eat that meat once and she had miscarried and god goods above, he hadn't known, they hadn't fucking known, *please.*

There were missing persons attributed to him that were none of his kills. His kills were barely traceable back to him, and Hannibal had been so very cautious to burn his Rolodex and patient files before leaving. They would never truly know.

Scott had fended quite a few calls from his friends and acquaintances himself, silently thanking the gods for not having put him or his family in Hannibal's path or near his dinner table even once. The Ambassador of France, Antoine Allard, a personal friend had called Scott heaving.

"I can't believe I didn't know," he admitted sadly. "Even now, I look back at him and see nothing of the monster he must have been. And to think, I met the poor boy once. Didn't even talk to him much. How scared he must have been, bless his soul. I wish I could have just told him that things would get better soon, but they never did for him, did they?"

Scott stirred in excitement. "You met Will?" Back when he was still alive? It almost seemed like a novel meet. He wished for the chance so bad it clawed at him, though he understood it was too late for that now.

"Saw him," the diplomat admitted ruefully. "Hannibal was most insistent on leaving him to his peace and solitude, and Dr. Graham did not seem like he enjoyed the idea of any of our company. Drank canned beer all night long, and refused the doctor's wine and food most insistently. We naturally thought him rude and crass. If only we had known then what we know now."

Scott exhaled. A recurring theme in this case. In life generally as well. "That's why they warn against judgment, I believe. You simply don't know what lies behind that person's mask and why they choose to act the way they do."

Antonie chuckled ruefully, not at all offended. "I dearly hope I have learned my lesson from this time. I can't help thinking, if I had just walked to him and talked to him, helped him somehow, done something. What an impossibly brave young man though."

Scott smiled a little at the praise. He was a sucker nowadays for anyone who could see Will as the legend he was. “I agree."

~

Scott had made most of the witnesses cry on the stand by now. His wrath was an almost tangible presence in the already suffocating room. It still didn’t move Agent Jack Crawford that easily though.

The man was a big smoldering mass of muscle with sharp eyes and sharper wit. Scott knew Crawford’s reputation well. With an excellent closure rate, Crawford strived to achieve justice by any and all means necessary. Years ago, he had withstood the stand and scrutiny at the death of a trainee Miriam Lass at the hands of the Ripper. Now he stood again, facing public backlash at his failure against the very same killer by losing someone on his team who had no business being there.

Scott mentally rewound what Will had written about Crawford, *I look at him and I crave that silent dedication sometimes. I borrowed it from him on more than one occasion. I had no expectations from Jack and so he has yet to let me down, but I still find myself surprised when he comes to visit me without a case file in hand on rare occasions. He stands there over my cell like even this filth can’t possibly touch him, and I absorb that neutrality. This cell isn’t humane enough for me, and so I must strip myself of my humanity if I am to survive this. He is a good benchmark for that.*

“Inhuman,” Scott whispered as he walked to Jack Crawford. “That’s what he thought of you. Nice boss, you were to him.”

Crawford didn’t take the bait. Simply stared back at him stonily. Scott mentally cursed himself for not having had Crawford take the stand before when the shock and horror were enough to have him stammering and crying. He had cried for Miriam Lass too. His tears and regret now meant very little to Scott. He had the feeling it would mean little to a dead man too.

“So, Agent Crawford, is it true that Will Graham asked you to accept his resignation multiple times? Most of them were informal verbal requests to not call him out to the next crime scene, but a couple of times he sent official mails with a letter of resignation that you made him take back each time.”

“Will was confused about what he wanted. He wanted to save lives, and he understood that what he was doing was leagues ahead of any other profiler. He also worried it wasn’t good for him.”

“But it was good for you, so you didn’t want him to do what was good for him instead.”

“Hardly fair to pin another man’s decisions on me. I could hardly force him to work for me if he had truly been sure about not profiling.”

“Hardly fair to force a man to do your job when you know full well he didn’t want to. And his relationship with Hannibal Lecter was orchestrated by you, is that correct?” The

courtroom briefly buzzed with excitement at the name of the infamous serial killer.

Agent Crawford shifted briefly, looking uncomfortable for the first time on the stand. Good, he should. Scott had enough to bury him alongside the Ripper, if he insisted on being stubborn about it. “Will had an encounter out in the field. He needed a psych eval. Hannibal Lecter came highly recommended.”

Scott nodded amicably. “From Alana Bloom, yes. And you put him in eval with the same guy who was standing behind him when he shot that gun, both figuratively and literally. Lecter handed you a very obvious eval that was so ridiculously rubber-stamped, legal would laugh if they ever read more than two words on it. And then he proceeded to develop an unhealthy infatuation and eventual obsession with your profiler right under your nose, and you never even noticed?”

“He was good at hiding.”

“Clearly. Behind his dinner invitations and hour-long drives just to see Will, the man clearly never stepped out of his comfort zone to pursue a stronger relationship with Graham. I have seen my fair share of therapists and counselors. None of them ever dropped by my house to check on my dogs or wake me up to fresh breakfast.”

“They were also colleagues. They were both on equal standing outside their therapy sessions.”

“I don’t need to teach you the code of ethics to explain that relationships don’t exist in a vacuum, Agent. As his psychiatrist, Hannibal Lecter had a power over Will Graham that ultimately led to his downfall, and you never once questioned it? I wonder, if that makes you blind, incompetent, or were you covering up behind your good friend?”

For a second, there was a rush of chatter at the bold accusation, as the judge called for order.

“I really hope,” Crawford gritted his teeth. “That you’re not accusing me of being an accomplice to the Chesapeake Ripper.”

“Not an accomplice, no,” he agreed slowly. He didn’t have enough for that. It was a shame though. It would have been fitting if he had been thrown into jail for the same crimes he had thrown in Will for. The fire of justice burned in Scott’s heart and guts, made him snarl and made him protective.

He didn’t know Will, but now he knew him through days and days of pouring over him and his files and his diary and notes. He knew Will was a good man with the same ferocity that Lounds had once been convinced he was not. He had suffered enough on the hands of those who had sworn to uphold the law. But nothing would sully that man’s image now. Not again. Not on Scott’s watch.

“Is it true, Agent Crawford, that your wife was saved from an almost incurable form of cancer only by Hannibal Lecter’s connections and wealth? There was a new procedure that needed to be tested, and Hannibal pulled in the strings needed to make her the very first test

subject, a procedure that ended up saving her life. Something you could not have done without him."

Agent Crawford snarled, his composure lost at the reminder of his wife's brush with death, and his inability to protect her then. "I hardly knew of his crimes then, Mr. Williams. And I needed to save my wife."

Scott nodded, suddenly sympathetic. Too sympathetic, Crawford realized with a sinking heart. "I understand. What wouldn't we do for the people we love? After he saved your wife, you became better friends with him, am I right? Regular dinners, unquestioned friendship. You let him in on any case he deemed interesting, and never once questioned where the meat came from even when Will screamed the truth in your face?"

"I am aware," Crawford said, carefully trying to reign in his emotions. "That I was far from impartial when it came to Hannibal Lecter and Will Graham."

Scott nodded. "And it didn't once occur to transfer the case to someone else? Someone who could be impartial to this case? Why did you keep letting them work on cases together when they had such a strict power dynamic, Agent Crawford? And why did you let profilers into the field when paper profiles would have done just as well?"

"I wanted them to work as a well-oiled team. Even if it meant breaking a few rules."

"The rules aren't a suggestion. They exist for a reason, Agent Crawford. I am surprised that a man of your caliber can't tell that."

There was nothing he had to say to that, which satisfied Scott. He hoped they booted that man out of the FBI. They had certainly had no trouble throwing Will to the wolves when he stopped being useful.

~

Where people are three-dimensional, Hannibal exists in my head as a colorful four-dimensional creature. When I look at him, I see angels and devils, and heaven and hell, and beauty and horror. I never had Jack's obsession with the Ripper. I am starting to now, though. If Hannibal feels even a fraction of the things I feel when I think of him, then I suppose I can understand his obsession and his desire to put me under his thumb. It can't be easy being this out of control for a man who prides himself on his self-discipline.

~

The news isn't spicy enough to catch most people's attention, but for someone obsessed with Will Graham and by association, Hannibal Lecter, it was like finding the lost city of Atlantis. Hannibal Lecter's psychiatrist, Bedelia Du Maurier had been found.

And she was willing to talk.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

> Hi gosh, how long has it been?!! In the months since I have been gone, I got an internship, got fired from said internship due to lack of sufficient aggression (wtf?!), got a new job, finished college and lost my dog. It's been a wild ride, and very hectic besides, but the one thing that never changed was how much I missed this place. Writing and reading fanfics, being a part of this amazing community and people to whatever limited extent I can manage. Sorry for the delay, can't promise it won't happen again but if past trends are in any way indicative of future trends, I think I can promise I'll always make my way back here, sooner or later.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The first time Will Graham met Bedelia Du Maurier, it was from behind cell bars, when her curiosity and her pity overcame her natural survival instincts and she came to warn him, in a case of ‘too little too late’ but perhaps ‘better late than never’. The next time is the first time they officially meet.

Hannibal Lecter lets her in, past his outrageous paintings and sweeping grand stairway. Knocks on Will’s door where Will has been placidly sitting, staring at the wall, face buried in Winston’s fur. He is grateful Winston has a calm temperament. Buster would never have let Will hold him like a sentient teddy bear for hours at a time.

He shifts and taps his fingers against the desk nearby as a sign to let Hannibal come in. When Dr. Du Murier walks in behind him, Will’s eyes widen despite himself. He wonders how Hannibal knew. He wonders how to convince Hannibal to let Du Maurier go. He wonders if he will survive seeing an ally, however tenacious, die.

(He will, of course, he will. He has survived worse, after all. And the doctor was right, after all, damaged people survive better, and damn if Will isn’t damaged)

“Mr. Graham,” she started, her tone immaculately professional. “I am Dr. Bedelia Du Maurier. I am to be your new psychiatrist and confidant if that pleases you?”

Will stared. Was there a joke he was missing here?

“Darling, come now,” Hannibal implored. “We have been working on your appetite and lethargy yet, but there is still much an unbiased confidant can offer you. I think we both know by now that I am far from impartial when it comes to you.”

He wasn’t wrong. Sometimes Will thought he was the only living being who could get under Hannibal’s skin the way he did. And besides, Will needed an ally.

Someone who wouldn't pity him or laugh in his face when he told them that the mild-mannered psychiatrist sitting beside them played with morals as if they were suggestions coated with poison; when he told them how he felt inside, how he still feels when he realized he had eaten human beings. Real, actual humans whose families he had consoled and empathized with, cried and sobbed and raged inside his heart at the mere injustice of it all.

He didn't look up, just nodded into Winston's coat, eyes averted. Hannibal murmured his praise softly, as Dr. Du Maurier promised to come by the next day, and assured him that she knew ASL well. "You don't need to come to me, Mr. Graham. I can make a trip for a friend of a friend." *An enemy of an enemy,* she also meant. But she also meant, a friend of a friend. Strange how those things didn't cancel each other out. Strange how possessive and jealous and lonely Will felt at the idea he might not be unique in Hannibal's world.

Still, it was remarkable that she was fighting to break out, even now. She wasn't here for the fees or to expand her clientele. He doubted she had a big one, though she seemed competent enough. He didn't need anyone to tell him that Dr. Du Murier was a shut-in with borderline agoraphobic tendencies, probably a sign of trauma that Dr. Lecter himself undoubtedly caused. He had a habit of isolating people he liked. He wasn't one to share well.

There was so much to read in him sharing his psychiatrist with Will that the psychoanalyst in him was salivating. Still, he said nothing. Before she left, Dr. Du Murier whispered to him, "I am sorry I couldn't help more. This is all I can do."

He looked at her. Saw her jealousy and her animal fear. She was afraid of Hannibal. She craved him all the same. Hated Will for stealing her love away. Hated herself for thinking like that of a man who was already so ruined. They both knew Hannibal's regard for Will far outweighed his regard for Dr. Du Murier. He smiled sadly at her. Said nothing at all.

The rest of the world kept revolving just the same, the same change in seasons, the same meals shared in the same kitchen with the same man who was simultaneously Will's confidant and betrayer. Bedelia made her place subtly, just calmly sitting beside his bedside every morning at 10 with a tray of breakfast in hand and a book in the other.

The first day she was there, Will saw Hannibal frowning at her as she insisted on feeding Will in bed, and having her therapy session in his safe space, while Hannibal tried to argue about proper seating for meals and the preservation of Will's safe space. Will was used to being talked over like an inanimate object by now, and so did not see fit to throw his two cents in.

"There is a reason that therapy sessions need to be conducted in separate places. It is vital he does not associate his room with the tumultuous emotions that therapy may invoke in him."

"While conventionally, it is good practice to do so, this case is far from conventional."

"All the more reason to do things the traditional way and not leave a chance to new techniques that may or may not work."

"Would never have taken you for someone propagating the virtues of conventional therapy."

Hannibal stilled, her caustic replies stinging and rude in face of his insistence. “Is there something you wish to say to me a bit more directly, Bedelia?”

She glared at him, eyes furious. “I told you. I warned you to stop doing whatever you’re doing with Will Graham.”

Hannibal sneered. “Jealousy hardly suits you. And to be jealous of a man in your own psychiatric care? Hardly knew you to be this unprofessional.”

“And you would know all about professionalism.” Bedelia sneered back even through her blush, just as capable of biting back when needs must. Hannibal had found it endearing once when it hadn’t been directed to him. Their fight was cut short by the slam of a door near them, startling them both to Will’s locked door.

“I don’t think he likes us fighting,” Bedelia slowly said, almost amused now despite her earlier anger.

Hannibal jumped at the door with the eagerness of a lost puppy. He tried the door. Locked. He knocked against the wood. “Will? Is everything alright?”

Bedelia eyed him, disdain and curiosity battling for dominance. To see Hannibal Lecter be brought so low by a mute ex-profiler was almost insulting when she had tried so hard to disarm him for so many years. “Do we need to force the door?”

Hannibal sighed, rubbing his hand against his face. “The room is entirely without windows and there are no sharp objects in sight. Besides, Will has Winston in there to care for. He will come out eventually. Let him be.” He eyed her. “Though, I do believe Will was promised a session before your frightening lack of decorum, Dr. Du Maurier.”

She shivered in fear at his black gaze.

~

It was six months since the day when Hannibal Lecter had brought Will Graham home when he declared his sudden desire for a party. Will had been tracing the designs at the edge of Hannibal’s ornate table and Dr. Du Maurier was sitting opposite him, somehow managing to choke down whatever meat Hannibal had thrown into his lunch.

Will had, just as politely as the first thousand times, refused his portion. Just watching them eat had robbed him of his appetite. That was nothing new though. After their first fight, Hannibal had convinced the other doctor of his way of thinking, to no one’s surprise. Will neither knew how nor understood the hold he had over the other doctor.

What it meant was, Will’s hopes of his ally had dwindled as soon as they had grown. It was nothing new. He was used to it. What was surprising was how often Bedelia seemed to be around after that.

Often spending a meal or two every other day, Bedelia did not seem to have the option to refuse Hannibal’s meals that Will himself had been so graciously granted. Where Hannibal

was indulgent and attentive and even doting to Will's moods and needs, he was often caustic and dismissive of Bedelia's presence. Will suspected he was proving a point with the sharp dichotomy he showed with his contrasting behaviour that he didn't care enough to decipher.

Today was no different.

Hannibal turned to his companions and smiled at them. Will uneasily noted just how sharp the man's canines looked. "What do you think, Will?"

Will glanced back, helplessly. He didn't have the right answer. He didn't have an answer. He barely managed a hum. Hannibal just nodded seriously as if he had said something profound.

Bedelia sighed and sipped more of her wine in tired resignation. "This was really not the retirement I had planned."

Will could relate.

~

There were ambassadors and ministers and art critics and artists and cultured rich men and women who happily guzzled at the blood and flesh of human beings in a remarkable sense of ignorance that almost fascinated Will.

Hannibal had been so very busy for this party. Locking Will's doors as he walked out of his home at night, brazen as can be, as Will trembled into Winston's coat. Bedelia had, for all her animal curiosity, taken his hand in their next session and held it for a few seconds in some semblance of comfort Will could not even begin to give.

They both kept their mouth shut about the Ripper's sounder, viral all over social media.

Hannibal, for his part, was in an exceptionally good mood all week long. He booked the perfect floral arrangements and the coasters to match. He polished his house and tended to his herb garden. He hummed as he cooked and even tolerated Bedelia's presence with a smile but dared not cross the delicate balance between Will and himself. Will had no doubt that if allowed, Hannibal would have happily doted on him even more in this sudden splurge of good mood.

Will, for his part, watched it all with a dispassionate gaze, relieved that Hannibal had other things to occupy his mind than just him for now.

The day of the event was an affair to remember. Outrageously expensive wine and decor, and well-dressed people gifting Hannibal with expensive trinkets and collectors' items that were worth anything above Will had seen before. Despite his class, the flash of wealth neither surprised nor made Will uncomfortable.

His discomfort was reserved for the dishes and the people and the dishes that were people.

Nobody tried to talk to him, not even once. He didn't try to talk to anyone either. He saw Bedelia holding a conversation with someone and Hannibal making his rounds and turned his head back to his beer.

Unsurprisingly, it was a very lonely night for him.

In the end, Hannibal ushered out his guests and finally turned to Will, loosening his tie as he did so.

“So, what do you think?”

Will calmly looked up at the predator in front of him. “I refuse to join any more of your parties. I don’t think they’re for me.” Despite his polite words, a part of his heart was beating just a little faster. His docility and placid nature were a farce that had been pushed on him with drugs and repeated treatment. He was starting to remember, though barely, that he wasn’t always who he is today.

And the person he was, could be considered rude by many people. And Dr. Lecter loved eating rude men.

Contrary to expectations, Hannibal just smiled serenely, almost looking smugly victorious. “As you please, my darling.”

Chapter End Notes

> Okay wow, poor Will, finally trying to flex his wings a little. Or is he just playing into Hannibal's hands after all?

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bedelia Du Maurier was an immaculate beauty with coiled hair and a measured expression. She seemed an ageless entity that reminded most people uncomfortably of Hannibal Lecter. Jack observed her from behind the viewing mirror. Officially on suspension, it hadn't been easy calling on a favor to watch her get interviewed in person and next to impossible to talk to her.

The agent-in-charge, Kyle Robinson, walked to her with his partner, Liam Black. He switched on the recorder. Reminded her of her rights, detailed the time and place, and name of the witness.

"So, Dr. Du Murier, you have been Hannibal Lecter's therapist for the past…?"

"Psychatriast please. For the past 7 years."

Kyle raised an eyebrow. "Long time to be duped by someone supposed to be baring your soul to you."

She smiled thinly. "I had patient-doctor confidentiality laws to obey. And he was hardly foolish enough to spill his secrets that overtly. While he often alluded to disturbing things, they were far from enough to break confidentiality."

"I see," Kyle raised a judgmental eye. Liam smiled sympathetically. "It can often be difficult to get away from dangerous men."

Bedelia sagged, tiring before their eyes. "I don't think I realized just how dangerous he was. He had a darkness that charmed me. He was elusive and aloof, both qualities that kept me on my toes. I never imagined how deep it ran."

Liam leaned forward, eyes soft. "Nobody is blaming you for doing what you did to survive, Doctor. I am sure he had his charms. But surely, there are things he told you in confidence that would help us better track where he went. He cared enough to let you go after all."

Bedelia scoffed, eyes weary. "You won't catch him, detectives. He is too smart to be caught. Besides, he didn't let me go. Will made him."

Kyle leaned forward, interested. "Will? Will Graham?"

"The very same. And I dare say, the only man capable of bringing that monster to heel."

Even Kyle paused in respect here. Jack felt his jaw clench. "I have heard nothing but good things about him," Liam admitted.

Bedelia shrugged. “He is a national hero now. Of course, nobody would dare say bad things about him. But, I must admit, he has a certain gravity you can’t overlook. He is… singular. And he has the drive to protect innocents that is unmatched by any other.”

Kyle raised a brow at the present tense. “You sound like you respect him too.”

To their collective surprise, she blushed.

“You were having an affair with him,” Liam was the first to realize.

She shrugged, almost awkwardly, ever the consummate actress when she needed to be. “Mostly an emotional one. Hannibal Lecter could barely even tolerate that much under his roof.”

Kyle clenched his jaw. “You were his object of affection. And Will Graham was already his enemy. I dare say, you must have made things more difficult for him in that house.”

She laughed at that, genuinely taken aback. “You mean, you still don’t get it?”

Liam and Kyle shared a look. “Get what?”

“If Will was just a worthy opponent, Hannibal would have poisoned him in his cell and blamed it on Chilton, would have made him disappear, killed him years ago. Whatever you must say about the man, Hannibal was man enough to respect his opponents.”

“And yet,” Kyle said drily. “He dragged Will to his home, kicking and screaming, and kept him there for years.”

“Tell me, detectives. Do you pick up trash or jewels to bring to your homes? Hannibal respected Will for a lot of reasons. He was also a worthy opponent, deserving of a quick death if push came to shove. And yet, he brought him into his home, endangered himself more, and turned his life upside down. You don’t do that for someone you despise. You do that for someone you admire. Adore. Covet. Perhaps someone you don’t want too far from you, because you can’t bear to be apart from them.”

There was stunned silence.

Kyle leaned forward. “Are you implying that Hannibal Lecter was in love with Will Graham?”

She smiled enigmatically. “Love is a gentle term that means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. I can tell you he ached for Will, that the two years were a trial in making. He tried to drown that hole Will left, but nothing quite fit that hole in his chest. He told me once that Cupid either strikes you a visit or it doesn’t when we were talking about Will. I believe that *he* believes that Cupid struck him a visit.”

“Psychopaths can’t love.”

“I never said he was one. I believe even Will would refute such a statement.”

“So what is he?”

“Something the world has never seen,” she said ominously.

“And yet I refuse to believe he loved Dr. Graham. Manipulation and coercion is not love, just as rape is not sex.”

She shrugged. “Call it obsession then. It hardly matters what you choose to call it. It does not change the reality of it.”

“You believe Will loved him back?”

“I would say these words aren’t enough to define the complexity of the emotions that Will felt for him. But yes, they did learn to cohabitate in the same space after a while.”

“And yet you had an affair with Will Graham.”

“It’s easy to fall into his orbit if he lets you in,” she admitted. “And our relationship wasn’t necessarily romantic or sexual. Just intense. Not Hannibal-and-Will level intense, of course. They had found something in each other rare few could hope to emulate.”

“So you and Will Graham had an affair under a serial killer’s roof wherein said serial killer was obsessed with Will, and Will still managed to convince him to spare your life?”

“He is the best in the business. And he had something Hannibal desperately wanted.”

“A good fuck,” Kyle said crudely, shaking his head. “Poor guy.”

Bedelia smiled thinly. “Not a fuck, Agents. Hannibal asked Will to promise to run away with him and stay with him as his the rest of his life. Whatever that meant to Hannibal. Will agreed on the condition that Hannibal never kill anyone ever again. They both agreed to it. Like I said, Will had a strong urge to protect. He couldn’t bear to see people die. And he had gotten attached in the years together. He said he was damaged already, might as well put it to good use.”

Jack suddenly had a very bad feeling about this. Liam tilted his head in consideration. “But… the promise no longer holds now that Will is dead, does it?”

“But… whoever said Will was dead, agents?”

Hannibal was right, after all. The look of pale horror on their faces was something Bedelia would cherish forever.

Chapter End Notes

Wow, I am a monster, aren't I? ;D
I have no regrets.

Chapter 8

Will, despite everything, wasn't too fond of Dr. Du Maurier.

She was his only ally. She was also a dangerous enemy. There was always the danger of Will's feelings and thoughts and desires leaking back to Hannibal through her. She could always be relied on to do what was best for her. And Hannibal could always be relied on to take Will at his most vulnerable and break him. Will felt broken enough already. He did not want to add more damage to the list.

It had been 1 year and 4 months since Hannibal dragged him home. It had been almost 3 years since his journals, his last mode of communication to the world, had been confiscated. It had been 2 years and 7 months since Will stopped reaching out.

Not that he was counting.

He would often spend his days with Winston, basking in the sun until he burned, and his meal times silently listening to Hannibal talk at him. Lately, Hannibal let their meals pass in quiet silence. Will appreciated it. He liked everything quiet. Nothing explosive and loud.

The therapy sessions were hateful though.

Bedelia would try to coax him out of his shell, sweet and kind, abrasive and haughty. Sometimes verbally, sometimes with gestures. She tried handing him sketch pads that he never drew on, and journals that he never bothered to open.

She was hateful because she knew how to get to him. His hands itched to write, to scream, to cry. He hadn't done anything in so long, he was scared to try again. All he wanted was to sleep. Just to sleep.

~

Hannibal had a fixed routine with his patients. And Will was so so very resourceful.

It was easy enough to pry the medical cabinet open. To get the sleeping meds. Whiskey first before he stopped caring what he was drinking.

He drank whiskey, then some wine. Then he started swallowing those pills again. Stupid Hannibal. It amused him to think of his rotting stench stinking up his immaculate house. He hoped it drove Hannibal insane. He hoped it would reflect badly on his immaculate record, even when he knew Hannibal wouldn't let it.

The whimpering from Winston cut through his daydreams.

He glanced down, almost in shock at the empty flask, at the empty bottle of pills. Had he really taken them all? His gaze fell on Winston.

There was no fear at rock bottom. His life was hell, he was in hell. He saw no light, he felt no pain. The fear he usually felt was fleeting, not as intense. But looking at Winston, he jolted as he realized with abrupt horror, *Hannibal would kill my Winston if I die today* .

Then, I can't die today. I can't fucking die today.

Oh god, Winston.

Thankfully, that was the exact moment he lurched up and threw up. Hannibal won't like this either, he thought stupidly. Then threw up some more.

It was only half an hour later when Hannibal would come in, earlier than planned due to a rather rude cancellation, and see Will sobbing on the floor, hugging his mutt, as the scent of vomit permeated his house. Will looked up, his eyes wild and red and furious in a way Hannibal had never ever seen. They were the loveliest pair of eyes Hannibal had ever seen.

"You took so much from me," he whispered. "I won't let you take my life too. I *won't."*

It had hardly been him who had drowned down his medicine and liquor cabinet in a fit of despondency. And yet, it would, could only be his rage that would protect Will from himself. Nobody else could do it for him. Hannibal had learned this the hard way. Nobody was ever coming to help. You had to walk your path all by your lonesome.

"I only protected you from this," Hannibal said calmly. Practically goaded.

"I don't need your protection. I don't need anybody's protection."

Good, Hannibal thought viciously inside. You shouldn't need it. You're strongest as you are. "You said you feel unstable. Do you still feel it?"

Will looked up. The shadows across the waning light made him seem surreal and otherworldly. "No more," he intoned. "Call off your hound. I don't want any other person digging around my head. It is my right, and my right alone to live inside my head."

"Any sane psychiatrist would order a suicide watch after this."

"Would you?"

"I know better," Hannibal smiled. The fever always peaked before it waned. Things got worse before they got better. Will had just hit rock bottom and felt the rocks on which he lay broken. He would only come off stronger for this. Hannibal could hardly wait to see what came after.

~

Finding Hannibal Lecter had always been a priority. Now it was critical. He, after all, had a hostage, no matter how willing or brainwashed said hostage might be.

I might get to meet Will, after all , Scott thought, almost exhilarated at the thought. Winning the trial and winning it soon had become even more of a necessity. After all, if Will even

wanted to or had a chance to run away, he would hardly dare to run to law enforcement if they still had him listed as a criminal. People had gone through worse to stay away from prison.

Bedelia Du Maurier had just shrugged when asked where they might have gone. Law enforcement was going through each and every single piece of evidence with a sharp eye. Her home and documents were ransacked, and the warrants sped through for medical records in extenuating circumstances.

She wasn't wrong about one thing. She had a little bit of an obsession with Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter herself.

There were more photos than anyone knew what to do with.

One of them ducking against the crime scene; laughing together outside in a park; Lecter welcoming Will inside his house with a hand at his lower back; seriously conversing outside a crime scene, heads lowered, eyes trained on the papers in front of them; the two of them staring at each other with familiar, almost intimate ease…

It was easy to forget that Will Graham had found a confidant and friend in Lecter once. That Lecter's adoration had once been reciprocated in full. That there was nobody who would have marred their happiness and intimacy if Hannibal hadn't damaged it himself.

Jack hadn't said it in the trial, but he had understood how close those two were getting. He had never tried to stop it. After all, he knew well the euphoria of falling in love, and for all he was a terrible boss, he would have let those two find their happiness in each other. They deserved as much, didn't they? Until everything broke down.

Hannibal got what he wanted anyway, a voice nagged at Jack in the colder mornings when even Bella's warm arms couldn't push back his fears. It's not the same, he hushed it back, uncomfortable at the thought. Besides, it was unlikely to last long anyway. Jack would make sure Hannibal's smug happiness would not last long.

No matter what it took.

The End?

Hannibal walked in to find Will laying on the couch, socked feet dangling off the edges, Winston's tail curled against his hip. The sight made him smile, despite himself.

"Ding dong, the Chesapeake Ripper has a hostage."

Will glanced at the papers, and wrinkled his nose in disgust. "Why am I either the pathetic villain or the pathetic victim? You got to be the reluctant hero at my trial, and now you get to be a badass villain or something."

Hannibal looked to Will as if thinking, *what is this fool on about now?* Whatever. Stupid grandpa. As if he would get superhero movie vibes. Come to think of it, he probably didn't have cable while he was out hunting humans in his home forests for food. The reminder softened his heart.

"Well, they won't dare shoot you on sight now. I am too high-profile for them to let me die as a prisoner to you." He said almost smugly.

Hannibal rolled his eyes. The level of caution was almost obsessive but understandable. No criminal planned to be caught after all. "They won't find us, Will. I can promise you that." He said. "But we did implement the plan well."

If he ever got caught, they wouldn't dare shoot him. If he ever got caught, Will would still be free to come to rescue him. If they ever got caught, Will would never be tied to his crimes. It was fair. Will had served his jail time, in the worst possible way. He wouldn't survive any more of it.

"Still," Will grumbled and lay back down. "I need a hug, come and cuddle me."

Hannibal smiled indulgently at his spoiled husband. "Of course, darling. Whatever you say."

The letter was stuffed behind Will's bed, in the floorboards, a notoriously hard place to get at.

It read:

To whomever, this may concern,

If you're reading this, you probably know the truth about Hannibal Lecter now.

So far in my life, I have strived to do no harm. I was a model student. I never shoplifted as a child because it was the norm, or did drugs just because everyone seemed to be indulging in it. The world never understood me, but I always understood them and strived to do them well.

But there is the difficulty in doing good, in being morally right when the world tilts on its axis. I have the plan to expose Hannibal Lecter and put an end to this farce once and for all.

And yet, in doing so, I compromise my moral integrity. I have thought it through, and if I push him to the brink, I know there will be casualties.

But if I do nothing at all, he keeps on killing anyway. Undetected. Unhampered.

I can't play the life of a notorious serial killer in society, and his victim in my mind, over and over again, forever. Call me selfish. I am selfish. Consider it a confession, if you must. I swore to protect society once. I am too tired to do anymore.

But if I convince him to run away with me, just the two of us and no world to judge us for it, he will. He will give up this life, give up his practice and Baltimore and the Ripper. But I must commit to it. Because, as much as I want to win against him, I can't imagine a world without him. If he has lost, let him have lost to me, so that I may hold his hand through it. If I have won, I may as well let the world know it, though I care for it lesser and lesser as time passes by.

He would let Abigail go to live her life and all the consequences of all her actions. My recorded adoration for her would make things easier for her when I am hailed a hero.

I know how dangerous it is to write this out and leave it in the open. But this is just so big, and I have no confidants to confide in. I must talk to the world at least once before I promise to keep my mouth shut about this forever. So this is my confession. It is the last time I shall admit to what has happened, and what I did.

I ask for forgiveness in the same breath I know I don't deserve it anyway, in the same breath that I understand that there is nothing to forgive.

The letter was never found for all that the forensic team went over the room to the best of their capabilities. They may be good, but Will was better. It wouldn't be long before the paper would start melting, the ink bleeding from all the chemicals forensics and crime scene cleaners would throw at the floorboards.

That was okay too.

Will had counted on it, in fact.

This was his design.

End Notes

Autexousious: Exercising or possessing free will

Lemme know what you guys think!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!